

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUENOS 05338 081421Z

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ACTION ARA-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, AR

SUBJECT: BENITEZ TESTIFIES BEFORE CONGRESS

1. CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES SESSION OF AUGUST 6 PASSED ALMOST ENTIRE LEGISLATIVE DAY LISTENING TO TESTIMONY OF INTERIOR MINISTER BENITEZ. UNLIKE HIS EARLIER APPEARANCE BEFORE CONGRESS LAST WEEK WHICH RESULTED IN BLAND EXCHANGE OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY, AUGUST 6 MEETING CONCENTRATED PRINCIPALLY ON ISSUES OF SUBVERSION, CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM AND DISCUSSION OF CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION. FOLLOWING ARE KEY POINTS MADE BY BENITEZ.

2. STATE OF SIEGE - BENITEZ TOLD CHAMBER THAT WHILE CONGRESS HAD THE RIGHT TO LIFT THE STATE OF SIEGE, "PERMANENT" NATURE OF SUBVERSIVE EFFORT MADE SUCH A STEP INADVISABLE. FURTHER, AS TERRORISTS OPERATED ON NATIONAL SCALE, GOA COULD NOT LIFT SIEGE IN SELECTED AREAS OF COUNTRY. HE ADDED THAT GOA HOLDING 648 INDIVIDUALS UNDER PROVISIONS OF STATE OF SIEGE AUTHORITY.

3. TRIPLE A - ACCORDING TO BENITEZ GOA NOT ABLE TO DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT AAA ACTUALLY EXISTED. HE SPECULATED THAT MANY OF THE TERRORIST ACTS ATTRIBUTED TO AAA MIGHT BE WORK OF LEFTIST GROUPS.

4. CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM - BENITEZ TOLD CONGRESSMEN THAT WORK

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PAGE 02 BUENOS 05338 081421Z

ON PREPARING FOR CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM WAS "WELL ADVANCED." HE

EXPRESSED BELIEF THAT 1949 CONSTITUTION (I.E., THE "PERONIST" CONSTITUTION) SHOULD BE "POINT OF DEPARTURE" FOR DEBATE ON NEW CONSTITUTION.

5. POLITICAL SITUATION - BENITEZ BLAMED LACK OF JUSTICIALISTA PARTY ORGANIZATION AS BEING PARTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR COUNTRY'S PLLITICAL WOES. HE DENIED THAT MRS. PERON'S HEALTH IN ANY WAY CONTRIBUTING TO POLITICAL INSTABILITY.

6. COMMENT: FACT THAT BENITEZ COULD SIT DOWN AND DISCUSS IMPORTANT TOPICS WITH CONGRESS A POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT. HOWEVER, HIS COMMENTS DO NOT SEEM TO DIRECTLY ADDRESS PRESENT SITUATION WITH COMPLETE CANDR. HIS INGENUOUS COMMENTS ON AAA WILL BE SOURCE OF CONCERN IN MANY POLITICAL SECTORS.
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